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## **Ridley-Thomas Applauds Board's Approval of Innovative General Relief Pilot Program**

At its meeting Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors approved a pilot program with St. John's Well Child and Family Center that authorizes St. John's staff to identify and assist mentally and physically disabled General Relief (GR) recipients with obtaining Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Authorization of the pilot program allows St. John's Well Child and Family Center staff and Department of Public Social Services staff to go out into communities in the Second District to assist disabled residents with completing the SSI application, getting supportive services and if needed, initiating referrals to a health or mental health provider.

"We must ensure that individuals who have a mental or physical disability get the maximum care that they need," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. "This pilot program is designed to effectively help residents obtain SSI so that they can efficiently obtain housing and medical assistance."

The pilot program will enlist an outreach worker, a licensed psychiatrist, a program manager, and a driver to work together with GR recipients to assist them with applying and obtaining approval for Supplemental Security Income benefits.

Last year roughly 37,000 individuals in the Second District received GR assistance. A large number of these individuals are homeless. Of the 45,422 homeless individuals in Los Angeles County identified in the 2011 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count report, 19,380 of those individuals are in the Second Supervisorial District, making the district the highest concentrated area of homelessness in the County.

The County's General Relief program currently provides \$221 a month in financial assistance to indigent adults whereas \$845 a month is provided to SSI recipients.

"The difference in the amount of money between GR and SSI could make the difference between perpetual homelessness and getting off the streets," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas.

The selection of St. John's Well Child and Family Center comes two years after the Board approved a pilot program to identify one community-based organization to assist General Relief, Supplemental Security Income, and Medi-Cal Advocacy Program advocates in providing SSI services to General Relief participants.

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